

**Response Under 37 CFR § 1.116 –  
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IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A system for managing questions submitted by a person with a question (~~i.e., a question poser~~) and answered by one or more experts comprising:

- a question management server;
- a question poser communication interface;
- an expert communication interface;
- an expert ranking database for maintaining a list of experts in one or more categories along with an item of information indicative of timeliness of an expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by an expert;
- an expert set determinator for extracting a set of experts in a particular category from the expert ranking database based on the item of information indicative of timeliness of each expert in providing answers and quality of answers provided by each expert; and

- a sliding window manager for extracting a contiguous subset of the set of experts to whom to send a question received from a question poser.

2. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

- a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser; and
- a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the feedback received from the question poser.

3. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising:

- an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to answer a question; and
- a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question.

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4. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising:
- a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser;
  - an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to answer a question; and
  - a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the time taken by the expert to answer the question and the feedback received from the question poser.
5. (Previously Presented) A method on a server for managing questions received via a network from a plurality of client systems comprising steps of:
- receiving a question from a question poser using a client system;
  - extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores, wherein ranking scores are based on timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert;
  - selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores;
  - and
  - providing the question to the subset of experts.
6. (Original) A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:
- receiving an answers from an expert; and
  - sending the answer to the question poser.
7. (Original) A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:
- receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an answer provided by the expert; and
  - adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback response.

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8. (Original) A method according to claim 6, further comprising steps of:  
    timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and  
    adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time taken.
9. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 6, comprising a step of:  
    timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;  
    reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in a subject category;  
and  
    adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.
10. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:  
    reading a time limit;  
    starting a timer;  
    waiting until the timer reaches the time limit; and  
    adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer having reached the time limit.
11. (Original) The method according to claim 10 wherein the step of reading a time limit comprises a substep of:  
    receiving a time constraint from the question poser.
12. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:  
    receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert; and  
    adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.
13. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:  
    receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;  
    performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit

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declination to a preselected declination limit time; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

14. (Original) A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:

sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and  
receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short.

15. (Original) A method according to claim 14, further comprising steps of:

storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit was too short;

waiting until a time period has elapsed;

obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;

performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and

adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

16. (Previously Presented) A method for operating an expert answer web site comprising steps of:

receiving a question from a question poser;

selecting a set of experts on the basis of timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert; and

notifying the set of experts of the question.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

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19. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of experts comprises a substep of:

generating and sending a web page including the question.

20. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium containing programming instructions for managing a question answer system comprising programming instructions for:

receiving a question from a question poser;

extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores, wherein ranking scores are based on timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert;

selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores;

and

providing the question to the subset of experts.;

21. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising programming instructions for:

receiving an answers from an expert; and

sending the answer to the question poser.

22. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising programming instruction for:

receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an answer provided by the expert; and

adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback response.

23. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 21, further comprising programming instructions for:

timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and

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adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time taken.

24. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 21, comprising programming instructions for:

- timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;
- reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category; and

- adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.

25. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

- reading a time limit;
- starting a timer;
- waiting until the timer reaches the time limit;
- adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer having reached the time limit.

26. (Original) The computer readable medium according to claim 25, wherein the programming instructions for reading a time limit comprises programming instructions for:

- receiving a time constraint from the question poser.

27. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

- receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert; and
- adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the explicit declination.

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28. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

- receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;
- performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit declination to a preselected declination limit time; and
- adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

29. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming instructions for:

- sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and
- receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short.

30. (Original) A computer readable medium according to claim 29, further comprising programming instructions for:

- storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit was too short;
- waiting until a time period has elapsed;
- obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;
- performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and
- adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the comparison.

31. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium for operating an expert answer web site comprising programming instructions for:

- receiving a question from a question poser;
- selecting a set of experts on the basis of timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the answers provided by each expert; and
- notifying the set of experts of the question.

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32. (Original) The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

33. (Original) The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises programming instructions for:

sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

34. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

generating and sending a web page including the question.



**Response Under 37 CFR § 1.118 –****Expedited Procedure - Examining Group 2157****FINAL OFFICE ACTION IS INAPPROPRIATE IN VIEW OF NEWLY CITED ART**

Applicants have studied the Office Action dated May 19, 2004. Applicants respectfully request entry of these remarks under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.116(a) in that the remarks below place the application and claims in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully requested. Claims 1 and 20 have been amended to clarify the invention. No new matter has been added. Claims 1-34 are pending in view of the above amendments. Reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims in view of the above amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

As an initial matter, the Examiner made the Office Action final based on a new ground of rejection not stated in the earlier Office Action. Applicants respectfully traverse this decision. In the Final Office Action, the Examiner rejects the present claims by citing rejected claims 1-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nielsen (U.S. 5,948,054) in view of Dworkin et al. (U.S. 6,026,148). The Applicants respectfully point out that the Dworkin reference was not cited in any previous Office Action.

According to MPEP § 706.07(a): "Under present practice, second or any subsequent actions on the merits shall be final, except where the examiner introduces a new ground of rejection not necessitated by amendment of the application by applicant, whether or not the prior art is already of record." In the previous Office Action dated December 15, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 1-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nielsen (U.S. 5,948,054). In the previously-filed amendment, Applicants amended the independent claims 1, 5, 16, 20, and 31 for clarity and to specify that the selection of experts to answer a question is based on the timeliness of an expert in answering questions. The Applicants did not switch from one subject matter to another or resort to any subterfuge to keep the application pending.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is respectfully submitted that the final status of the Office Action is premature and should be withdrawn.

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<sup>1</sup> See MPEP § 706.07.